

March is Women's History Month: A Time to Celebrate America's Women Entrepreneurs

Celebrating Women

Since 1987, we have honored Women during the month of March for the contributions they have made toward history, culture, and society. The 2018 theme for National Women's History Month is “#NEVERTHELESS SHE PERSISTED: Honoring Women Who Fight All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.” We are honored to recognize those who have successfully challenged the discrimination women face as entrepreneurs and as members of the paid labor force. Women have always worked hard, but often their work has been undervalued and underpaid. Times are changing.

Women in Business

Women are celebrated and honored every single day by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). We recognize the value that women entrepreneurs present to our great, growing economy. Women entrepreneurs challenge the discrimination that women face in the labor force every day by driving innovation and technology and placing small business on a global competitive playing field.

To drive the powerful influence of women entrepreneurs even further, it is important to understand that 9.4 million firms in the United States are owned by women, employing nearly 7.9 million people, and generating \$1.5 trillion in sales (www.nawbo.org). The job creation and positive impact on our nation's economy created by women entrepreneurs makes it very clear that there is no room for discrimination of any kind, and women entrepreneurs are key to our nation's success.

Women in Lending

In Fiscal Year 2017, nearly \$745 million in SBA-backed loans were approved for women-owned small businesses located across the Southeast Region (Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.) In the first three months of fiscal year 2018, we have witnessed nearly \$250 million in SBA-backed lending to women-owned businesses already. This lending trend represents small business growth, job creation, and sustainability.

Women in Contracting

In Fiscal Year 2016, the federal government awarded 4.79% of its contracts to woman-owned small businesses. This number is just shy of the 5% goal that is set each year for the government to reach. \$19.67 billion was awarded to women entrepreneurs in the form of a federal contract in fy 2016. Although this is a large sum of money, it isn't enough. There is more work to do. Months such as this where women are celebrated are key and are a great reminder that it is necessary to honor the history of women and to continually challenge the discriminations that women face. The SBA team works around the clock with women small business owners to meet the federal contracting goal year after year. Women in contracting are a powerful force. This is truly a reason to celebrate women- not only this month, but every month and every day.

Women in Counseling

In the SBA's Southeast Region, the Women's Business Centers have assisted women entrepreneurs through counseling and training and their unique, innovative courses they offer across this region. The Centers create opportunities for women business owners that are one of a kind and truly help overcome the challenges that many women business owners face; including the challenge of discrimination. In fiscal year 2017, nearly 22,000 women entrepreneurs were trained and counseled through the Women's Business Centers located throughout the Southeast Region. To locate a Women's Business Center near you, please visit [here](#). These Centers assure that we will have plenty to celebrate every March for many, many years to come.

For more information on SBA's programs and services please visit www.sba.gov. For more information on programs for women in business, please click [here](#).